



HQ AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB TX



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Posted on Sun, Feb. 22, 2004

Reports of rapes vex city, air base

By Jack Douglas Jr.

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

WICHITA FALLS - Women in uniform aren't talking.

Nervous city officials are declining to comment.

And the military is being careful what it discloses amid questions about how Sheppard Air Force Base is dealing with young women who remained silent after being attacked by fellow soldiers.

The uneasiness has been triggered by reports that as many as 25 women from Sheppard were raped between September 2002 and August 2003 and that their attackers were soldiers from the base.

"I'm sure no community, Wichita Falls included, wants to expose that underbelly of what happens. And the fact is, sexual assaults are part of every community, including Wichita Falls and Sheppard Air Force Base, and nobody wants to embrace that," said Laura Grimsinger, a former director of First Step, a rape-crisis clinic in Wichita Falls.

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, called for a full investigation of how the attacks were handled, "with full emphasis on how commanders concluded each of these cases to the satisfaction of both the Air Force and the alleged victims."

In a letter to James Roche, secretary of the Air Force, Hutchison said, "It is particularly important the women on the base be able to anonymously give ... an assessment of the situation."

A review panel spent last week interviewing officers and young recruits at Sheppard in an attempt to assess the "climate" in which sexual-assault victims seek help, according to the military.

The 22-member panel is "examining the effectiveness of all plans, programs, policies and procedures in place ... to prevent sexual assaults," said David Smith, a civilian spokesman for the military.

The panel is also working to "ensure swift and appropriate actions are taken when sexual assaults are reported or discovered," Smith said.

Base supervisors did not always do enough to help rape victims or to pursue their attackers, according to a report by *The Denver Post*.

Major Manning Brown, a spokesman for Sheppard, said that from 1993 to 2003, 42 men at the base were disciplined as sexual predators, receiving either a court-martial or a "nonjudicial punishment," which can be as light as a cut in salary.

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Brown declined to say how many were court-martialed and how many received lesser penalties. Nor would he elaborate on how the base determined the severity of the punishments, other than to say, "The situations and circumstances are certainly a factor."

Grimsinger said many of the rape victims she saw from Sheppard did not believe that their attackers were punished severely enough.

"Knowing that your offender just got a reduction in pay, that hurts ... that truly minimizes the attack," said Grimsinger, who was clinic director from 1987 to 2002.

Hutchison had a similar reaction to how Sheppard's command staff reportedly handled rape cases.

"I am deeply concerned," Hutchison wrote in her letter to Roche. "I feel the situation at Sheppard could rival that of the Air Force Academy [in Colorado Springs, Colo.] -- where the military's mishandling of sexual assault complaints was exposed last year."

Even as the military conducted its investigation last week, there was more bad news.

Staff Sgt. Edmund Ehring, a fighter-pilot instructor who had been charged last month with sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl, was found dead in his base dormitory early Tuesday.

"There's nothing to indicate any relation" between the ongoing military review and Ehring's death, said Brown, the base spokesman. The death is being investigated as a suicide.

Established in 1941, Sheppard is a sprawling, 5,500-acre training facility with more than 6,000 student recruits, most of whom are 18 to 24 years old. The recruits train to become technical-maintenance experts and are deemed "combat ready" after a few months at most.

Sheppard is also home to the elite Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Unit, where 450 students from the United States and 12 other countries study for a year before, as a Wichita Falls tourist guide puts it, becoming the "cream of the crop" of fighter pilots.

Civic leaders in Wichita Falls, a city accustomed to economic droughts and stinging dust storms, are highly protective of Sheppard, which pumps an estimated \$700 million into the local economy each year.

"There's hundreds of projects that the community and Sheppard Air Force Base work together on that would demonstrate the close relationship that we have," said Tim Chase, president of the Wichita Falls Board of Commerce & Industry, an economic-development group.

Area politicians, city officials and even the local newspaper, the *Times Record News*, have rallied around Sheppard in the wake of suspicions that the base may have, at times, allowed seemingly promising soldiers to walk free after being exposed as sexual predators.

When it comes to discussions about sexual assaults, a code of silence also prevails among the women in uniform at Sheppard. "We can't talk to any media," said one female soldier, waving off a reporter as she ate at a restaurant near the front gates of the base.

And at Tobys, a popular club for the military, an employee said a female friend who works at the base told him that if she talked publicly about the ongoing investigation, she could "go to jail."

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Xochitl Pruitt, program director at First Step, said she understands the local support for Sheppard and the reluctance to talk about something as disturbing as rape.

But silence should not come at the expense of assault victims who need help and encouragement to heal, Pruitt said.

"Sexual assault is a problem. And society as a whole tries to minimize it. That's a problem," she said.

At Sheppard, male cadets outnumber female cadets five to one, according to base officials.

In a recent 12-month period, 20 to 25 women went to First Step and said they had been raped or gang raped by men from the base, according to Pruitt and Monná Kline, interim director of the clinic.

Most of the attacks, they said, occurred off base, and most of the suspects were classmates of their victims.

Pruitt and Kline said the women, because of shame or because they thought they had violated rules, were reluctant to report their attacks to Sheppard officials.

That and First Step's vow to keep the cases confidential make it difficult for Sheppard to address the problem, Kline said.

"I believe that if they know about them, they will do everything in their power" to help, Kline said of Sheppard officials. "But if they don't know about them, they can't fix the problem."

The counseling clinic's former director, Grimsinger, is a mild-mannered woman with a friendly smile. She appears uneasy in her role as one of the few people to publicly question Sheppard's handling of sexual-assault cases.

She is also quick to praise First Step's continuing work to help rape victims.

And she said she feels guilty for possibly not being aggressive enough during her tenure there to find out why Sheppard cadets were so afraid to report the sexual attacks to military officials.

Now counseling elementary students in the small town of Electra, near Wichita Falls, Grimsinger said she is still haunted by the frightened looks on the women's faces.

"The victims were very mindful that what they said was not confidential, that it would follow them forever in their military career," she said.

"Whether they were victims of domestic violence or victims of sexual assault, that's how they felt. They didn't feel like they had the freedom to seek out help [at Sheppard].

"They didn't feel like they had support," Grimsinger said. "And in some instances, they felt punished."

A woman from Sheppard who walked into First Step in 2000 sticks in Grimsinger's mind.

The woman told base commanders that she had been raped by a man in her squadron. The man was not removed from the squadron, however, Grimsinger said.

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"For her, they absolutely minimized her assault. ... They didn't move the guy. She had to face him every day. And that was excruciating," Grimsinger said.

Adding insult to injury, Sheppard officials offered to move the victim from the squadron and told her to seek counseling at First Step, then called the clinic to make sure she was following orders, Grimsinger said.

"That particular individual just decided to drop out of the Air Force altogether," she said. "It was just too much."

Sheppard Air Force Base

- The base, completed in October 1941, was initially named Sheppard Field after U.S. Sen. John Morris Sheppard of Texas, who had died six months earlier.
- The base population is 28,500, including training cadets, officers and support staff. Most of the students are taught to be combat-ready technicians, specializing in such fields as aircraft maintenance, ground transportation, communications and health-care assistance.
- Sheppard is the host base for the elite Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Unit, with cadets from the United States and 12 other countries.
- The base brings an estimated \$700 million to the Wichita Falls economy each year.
- The base occupies on 5,500 square acres north of Wichita Falls.

SOURCES: The Handbook of Texas Online, Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls Board of Commerce & Industry



AETC Bases News Clips

Sheppard AFB, TX



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Sheppard's BRAC chances still look good

Sex assault allegations should have no bearing on base's future

By Lee B. Weaver
Times Record News
February 20, 2004

The Pentagon's 2005 BRAC criteria for military bases:

- The current and future capabilities and the impact on operational readiness of the Department of Defense's total force.
- The availability and condition of land, facilities and associated airspace at both existing and potential receiving locations.
- The availability to accommodate contingency, mobilization and future total force requirements at both existing and potential receiving locations to support operations and training.
- The cost of operations and the manpower implications.
- The extent and timing of potential costs and savings, including the number of years, beginning with the date of completion of the closure or realignment, for the savings to exceed the costs.
- The economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of military installations.
- The availability of both existing and potential receiving communities infrastructure to support forces, missions and personnel.
- The environmental impact and costs of potential environmental restorations, waste management and environmental compliance.
- The ongoing investigation into sexual assaults at Sheppard Air Force Base should do no harm to the Pentagon's future plans for the base.

Officials rejected the notion that the allegations or the inquiry into Sheppard's systems for dealing with rapes and rape victims - would negatively affect the next round of Base Realignment and Closure hearings.

Tim Chase, president of the Board of Commerce & Industry and a member of the Board of Commerce & Industry's Military Advisory Committee, said the BRAC review focuses on specific things.

"The criteria for BRAC are very clearly written, and they center around military value," Chase said. "I don't see how the current situation at Sheppard could have an impact on the future military value of the installation."

State Sen. Craig Estes, vice chairman of the Senate's Veterans Affairs and Military Installations committee echoed that sentiment.

"I do not expect the investigation ... will have any impact on the BRAC process," Estes said.

Estes gave Sheppard's command a vote of confidence.

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"I have full confidence in Gen. Rooney and his staff to make sure the policies and procedures are in place to address this issue," Estes said.

At the national level, Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood said that the allegations "have no bearing one way or the other" on the BRAC process.

"I don't know how you could make that leap," Flood said. "The criteria (the eight official measures for base closure) is there, and there are all kinds of questions that are part of the data calls," that will be used to judge each base, but statistics on rapes at each base are not among them, he said.

Paul Hirsch, a military base lobbyist who served as a staff director for the 1991 base closure commission, also said the recent allegations shouldn't weigh in on the process.

"From my experience of being senior staff on the BRAC commission, those kinds of things don't really weigh into the criteria the bases are judged against," Hirsch said.

Hirsch said that the 1991 BRAC process concerned itself only slightly with crime reports, assigning only one or two of 2,000 possible "data points" to the subject.

Staff writer Lee B. Weaver can be reached at (940) 763-7548 or with e-mail at [weaverl\(at\)timesrecordnews.com](mailto:weaverl@timesrecordnews.com).

Scripps Washington Bureau reporter Tara Copp contributed to this story.

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Altus AFB OK



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Fort Sill may gain from base closures

George Moses doesn't put much credence on circulating lists that purport to announce which military installations will be affected by the latest round of base closures, but his personal opinion is that Fort Sill has a better chance of gaining from the process than from losing.

Moses, the Lawton representative on the Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission, said the military services are just beginning to start the process of deciding where to base their future forces, which haven't been determined yet.

Moses told the Southwest Oklahoma Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America Thursday that Fort Sill supporters think they know what the Army will be looking for when it comes time to realign forces, but the Office of the Secretary of Defense is keeping mum about the future.

"That's the wild card in this whole thing," he said.

"Mr. (Defense Secretary Donald) Rumsfeld has locked down the OSD staff."

The Defense staff, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will play a more important role in the process than in earlier rounds. The Joint Chiefs, for example, are taking a strong role both in setting requirements and priorities.

"Decision authority is migrating up the chain," Moses said.

The also is a question of how the military — active-duty, National Guard and Reserve — will support homeland security and the infrastructure that will be needed for that mission.

Part of this round of the process will include cross-service studies of common activities — such as flight training — to determine where efficiencies can be implemented.

Moses said he's seen lists that purport to be service recommendations for closure and realignment, but he's skeptical.

His own analysis of Fort Sill's future is that the chance of closure is low and there is a slightly better chance for a long-term decrease in population and missions; but he thinks the odds are much better than the process will be to the post's benefit, although there may be bumps along the road.

"There will be some bad news come along before we hear the good news," he said.



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Moses said there are great opportunities for joint training with Fort Sill, Vance Air Force Base, Altus Air Force Base and Sheppard Air Force Base, and the combination of Altus Air Force Base, Fort Sill and the Lawton-Fort Sill Regional Airport provide a good platform from which to project American force around the world.

"Stay tuned," he said. "We've just begun, and we're in for a long haul."



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KEESLER AFB, MS



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Sheppard AFB sergeant found dead

Flight trainer faced sex-assault charges

By Miles Moffeit
Denver Post Staff Writer

A fighter-pilot instructor at Sheppard Air Force Base who faced sexual-assault charges was found dead at the Texas installation Tuesday, one day after an investigative team arrived to examine how commanders have responded to a series of reported rapes.

Although Sheppard officials declined to divulge details about Staff Sgt. Edmund Ehrling's death, his attorney says she believes it is being investigated as a suicide.

An Air Force spokesman declined to say whether the 35-year-old Ehrling, who faced allegations he had assaulted a 12-year-old girl in his home off base, had been interviewed by members of the Air Force investigative panel, saying "there was no connection" with the panel's work.

"His death is being investigated, and we won't be able to release any information until the coroner's report is released" after several days, said Maj. Manning Brown, a Sheppard spokesman.

Brig. Gen. Arthur Rooney Jr., who heads the bulk of training operations at Sheppard, released a statement saying, "The loss of any airman is felt by every member at Team Sheppard. Our prayers and thoughts are with the family of Staff Sgt. Ehrling."

Ehrling, a member of the 365th Training Squadron, was found in a dormitory room on the base. He was facing aggravated sexual-assault charges, said Dorie Glickman, a Wichita Falls lawyer who represented him. He had been released from jail on bond, she said.

The Air Force's largest training base, near Wichita Falls, is under intense scrutiny by Congress after The Denver Post reported Feb. 11 that First Step Inc., a local rape-crisis center, had handled more than two dozen sexual-assault reports in a year's span involving women stationed at Sheppard, most of them trainees. Five of those cases were gang rapes, according to First Step.

Following the report, the Air Force, acting on a request from Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, sent a "review team" of more than 15 Air Force personnel to examine how the base addresses sexual-assault reports.

Glickman wants a thorough investigation into Ehrling's death.

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"The last time I talked with him was early last week," Glickman said. "I don't know whether he met with the Air Force investigators. His case was still under investigation by police with Wichita Falls. He said his command was very concerned in general about how he was taking the stress."

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Communications officers' training receives update

By

Times staff writer

The training pipeline for Air Force communications officers is being upgraded.

The changes shorten courses new communications lieutenants attend at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. The changes also allow students to focus on skills needed for their first assignments.

The Keesler curriculum begins in March with 64 new students. By the end of the year, about 455 students will have taken the introductory course, said Maj. Richard Ess, a communications officer and director of operations for the 333rd Training Squadron at Keesler.

The training changes are the result of officers needing to keep up with the latest technology they'll use and the need for communications services at deployed bases, Ess said.

Air Force leaders consistently cite enlisted and commissioned communications airmen as among the combat-support troops who should expect a high-deployment rate. Ess spent four months in Iraq last summer.

Overall, the service has about 4,450 communications officers, making the career field among the largest of the service's nonflying specialties.

The major said the course structure has undergone few changes since he entered the career field in the mid-1980s.

With the old system, a new communications officer would spend about 13 weeks at Keesler attending Basic Communications Officer Training.

Then the officer went to his first assignment. The officer didn't return to Keesler until about a decade later to attend the Advanced Communications Officer Course.

The rapid changes in technology and the duties communications officers handle made that 10-year gap too long, Ess said.

Ten years ago the Internet wasn't widely used, and most officers grew up without computers in their homes or schools.

Today, military versions of the Internet relay everything from targeting information to pay data.

"If a network goes down, you can't do anything," Ess said.

Under the updated class schedule, new students will attend a five-week version of the basic course called Expeditionary Communications Officer Training.

Immediately after that, students will attend specialized courses focusing on the skills needed for their initial postings. Several courses will be offered, lasting one to five weeks. The courses will cover areas such as networking and electrical engineering.

Two to three years later, when a communications officer completes his first tour, he'll return to Keesler for another specialized course to help him get up to speed on skills he'll need for an upcoming assignment.

At about the 10-year mark, officers will come back to Keesler for a new version of the advanced course called the Communications Battlespace Management Course. The new three-week course will focus on what the officer needs to know to be a successful squadron-level commander, Ess said.

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The communications officer school also is upgrading its facilities, at a cost of about \$45,000, for each of six classrooms, Ess said.

Instead of having students watch PowerPoint presentations on how to perform tasks, the school will emphasize more hands-on training, Ess said.

Money for the classroom improvements are coming from the major commands, Ess said.

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Bonilla does double duty locally

Bonilla reconnects in Del Rio

BILL SONTAG

STAFF WRITER

Congressman Henry Bonilla welcomed his new office representative in Del Rio, Myria Fernandez-Alvarado, on her first day on the job at the Federal Courthouse at 2 p.m. Tuesday, then traveled to Laughlin Air Force Base to formally open a sumptuous, state-of-the-art lodging facility for dignitaries and guests to the base.

At 2 p.m., Myria Fernandez-Alvarado, a bit nervous and clearly excited, glanced out her first-floor office window in the Federal Courthouse building, 110 Broadway St. "He'll be here any

minute, I know he's on the way," she declared with obvious anticipation. Fernandez-Alvarado's bright red suit matched her mood, and, according to Sharon Byer, Bonilla's director of constituent services in San Antonio, the mood and the fashion reflected Fernandez-Alvarado's outlook.

And, indeed, only a few minutes past the appointed time, Bonilla emerged from a red SUV nearly as bright as Fernandez-Alvarado's attire. To a patter of applause, Bonilla joined civic leaders, friends and Fernandez-Alvarado's family members on the porch of the courthouse. Calling the crowd to attention, Bonilla warmly

welcomed Fernandez-Alvarado to her new position, gently admonishing her to expect a wide diversity of constituents and equally challenging variety of complaints that will be brought to her desk.

Bonilla thanked all present for the community support he enjoys in Del Rio, and then asked Del Rio Mayor Dora G. Alcalá, Val Verde County Judge Mike L. Fernandez and Sheriff A. D'Wayne Jernigan to join him in welcoming Fernandez-Alvarado.

She is the congressman's constituent liaison. Her duties include answering

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News-Herald photo by Bill Sentig

Myria Fernandez-Alvarado is welcomed by her new boss, Congressman Henry Bonilla, and a host of Del Rio and Val Verde County dignitaries Tuesday afternoon. Joining the new "constituent liaison" on the porch of the Federal Courthouse are (l-r) Val Verde County Judge Mike L. Fernandez, Del Rio Mayor Dora G. Alcalá, Bonilla, Val Verde County Sheriff A. D'Wayne Jernigan, Fernandez-Alvarado and Olga Gutierrez.

casework correspondence and communicating with constituents, acting as liaison with federal, district and local agencies, monitoring district and local issues and updating Phil Ricks, district director and chief of staff of Bonilla's office in San Antonio.

A native Del Rioan and graduate of Del Rio High School, Fernandez-Alvarado also attended Southwest Texas State Junior College and Durham Business College in San Antonio where she obtained an executive secretary diploma. Six years with the Attorney General's office in Del Rio and eight years with the U.S. Border Patrol Sector Headquarters as an assistant chief's secretary and purchasing agent rounded out her career to date.

"I wanted this job to be able to help the people in this community," Fernandez-Alvarado declared Tuesday. "I support Congressman Bonilla for everything he's ever done," she enthused. A mother of four, Fernandez-Alvarado is married to Raul Alvarado. Byer is in Del Rio to train and orient Fernandez-Alvarado in her new position, stating that her conviction that the new Del Rio incumbent is "very outgoing, friendly and eager, and a very caring person."

Fernandez-Alvarado will keep office hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and may be reached during those hours at 774-0547.

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VISITORS QUARTERS NOW HOSTING LAUGHLIN GUESTS

BILL SONTAG

STAFF WRITER

With his not inconsiderable influence on Capitol Hill as a senior member of the Defense and Foreign Operations Subcommittee in the House of Representatives, Congressman Henry Bonilla has secured more than \$25 million in new construction projects at Laughlin Air Force Base within the last year. One of three major building projects begun in 2003, the new Visitors Quarters (VQ) replaces the antiquated Laughlin Manor. Tuesday, Bonilla cut the ribbon to mark the splendid new facility's grand opening.

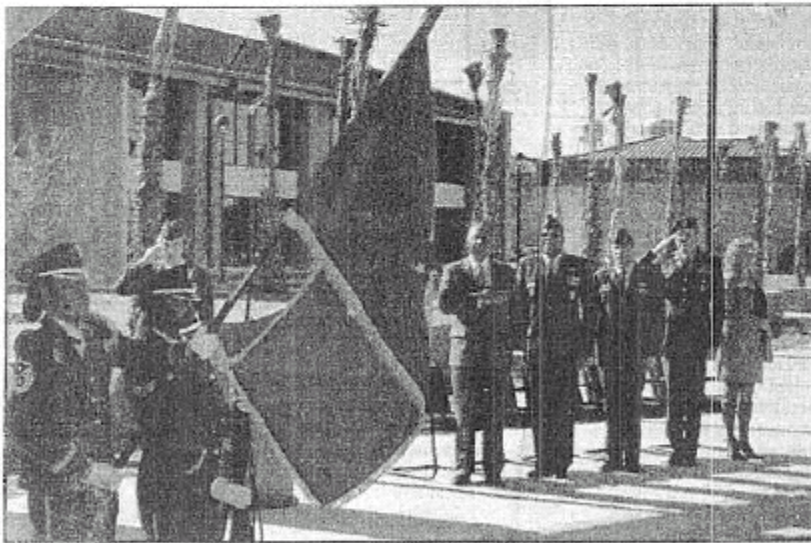
Enroute to LAFB, Bonilla commented on his role in beefing up the base's infrastructure: "The last thing we want to see is our pilots ever

struggling in any way. Especially when we're involved in a war on terrorism, we don't want our pilots looking over their shoulders. It's the least I can do to avoid that." During tours of the new VQ, LAFB Director of Services Chip Faver repeatedly emphasized that the comfort afforded in the 90 rooms and six "distinguished visitor suites" is integral to the Air Force mission of "putting bombs on target."

Approaching LAFB's main gate from Highway 90 East, Bonilla expressed his satisfaction: "I've taken many tours of this base over the years, and I'm very proud of all the improvements that have been made."

Seriously delayed at 2:45 p.m., but not derailed by a stalling freight train on Union

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News-Herald photo by Bill Sontag

Congressman Henry Bonilla and Air Force officials salute the colors during the National Anthem Tuesday afternoon in front of the 47th Flying Training Wing's brand new Visitors Quarters. Minutes later, Bonilla and Wing Commander Col. Daniel P. Woodward cut the ribbon formally opening the 96-room lodging accommodations to use by military personnel and official guests.

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Pacific tracks across Laughlin Air Force Base's primary entrance, Bonilla's chief concern regarding the delay was the inconvenience caused to those waiting on-base for his arrival, though the security implications of impeded ingress and egress to and from a military installation were discussed, too.

Finally, after a twenty-minute wait as the train remained motionless, LAFB Security Forces Capt. Gerald Mulhollen, escorted the congressman, his staff and this reporter through LAFB's west gate at 3:25 p.m., then to headquarters of the 47th Flying Training Wing. 47th Flying Training Wing Commander Col. Daniel P. Woodward met the congressman at wing headquarters and Lt. Gen. John D. Hopper Jr., vice commander of the Air Education Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio.

After a short briefing, Bonilla and his entourage arrived in time for posting of the colors at the Air Force-spiffy dedication site. Nearly 100 Air Force personnel, both civilian and military, and Del Rio and Val Verde County civic leaders faced a lowering sun in bleachers erected for the occasion in front of the imposing new building. After Bonilla's brief remarks, he joined base officials in cutting the pale, yellow ribbon across the covered esplanade leading to the building's inviting lobby entrance.

Participants flowed into the lobby of the new Visitors Quarters, and divided into small groups for tours of the rooms, suites and conference room. None of the rooms are large, averaging 280 square feet, but are beautifully furnished and decorated. Internet connections are provided in all rooms, and the facility also includes a coffee and breakfast bar, 24-hour ATM service and a state-of-the-art business center.

"State-of-the-art" is an Air Force mantra for the technology found throughout the building, including a key-less entry system and a second-floor conference room. A conference table concealing cable and electrical connections below the surface facilitates overhead projection of computer graphics.

Corridors of the building are decorated with photographs of missions and historic sites in San Antonio, and the conference room features several western scene prints by G. Harvey, a noted Hill Country artist. A total of \$862,000 was spent to furnish the building.

Faver explained that the quarters would be utilized by "transient duty personnel ... to ease the transition from one base to another," as well as family members of graduating student pilots during base ceremonies and dignitaries performing official functions such as speeches, inspections, and meetings with base officials.

While he acknowledged that Laughlin Manor "is still standing, but not for long," Faver pointed out that the sign from the historic building, now 50-years-old, was preserved at the entrance to the new VQ. Estimated cost for the entire facility is \$11.9 million. Faver declared that guests forced to stay in Del Rio hotels and accommodations cost the Air Force \$638,000 annually, a savings he anticipates will pay for the new structure early in the anticipated lifetime of the building.

Faver declared his intention to nominate the new building to competitions for architectural awards, adding, "This is the best 'bed night' in the Air Force!"

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AETC Bases News Clips

LUKE AFB, AZ



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home on? The developments, including Estrella Mountain Ranch have taken away all the flyable space.

You'd think that after six months of building your home you would have noticed the planes, and had asked about the base. Maybe your complaint should be with the Realtor's disclosure statement that went with your new home. Did it state the air base and Phoenix International Raceway? If not, then this issue should be brought up at city council meetings.

The more homes they sell to uninformed buyers will be the doom of the base. Did they show you the Luke map? This should be mandatory at all homes for sale within the flying zone.

It has been in the papers lately that they are repairing a runway at the base and that the planes would be using different routes. Maybe you need to become a better neighbor and westsider. Then again, any Realtor will be glad to sell your home for you and get you one on the east side.

**Linda Skaggs
Litchfield Park**

To the editor:

This is in response to the letter from Lew Shortridge and his complaints about Luke Air Force Base and the noise of the planes over Estrella Mountain Ranch. Mr. Shortridge, Luke Air Force Base was here long before you decided to move here. Why do you think you can move into an area and change things to suit yourself?

We natives are sick of people like you. I also live in Estrella Mountain Ranch, and when I hear those planes you are complaining about, I say a thank you to those who are willing to fly them and protect this country so we can live in a safe and free society.

If you want to complain, call your real estate lady and blame her, not Luke, which is so precious to the residents of Arizona and the citizens of the United States.

**Rita Bunyard
Goodyear**

My money's going elsewhere

To the editor:

Last March, when my husband called to say he had gotten his dream job, I was thrilled. He was getting the job he had wanted for years and would be doing something that I shared in his passion and love for. This week he is losing that job, in part, to some self-centered, whining people.

Dan Maloney is not a liar or a cheat; he is a man who tried to build a safe racetrack for people who enjoyed the sport of racing to go. He thought he was putting the track in an ideal location. Noise is not the issue; it is getting the track closed so developers could continue in their path to

close Luke and finish developing the surrounding area.

We have read the complaints in the letters to the editor. I have laughed at some, the man who complained about the height of the grandstands. I learned from attending various meetings that I now have no respect for senior citizens.

As for Mr. Maloney staying in Scottsdale, who would want to live in a town like Goodyear or Litchfield Park with the complaining and nit-picking that goes on? My husband and I may be a minority of two, but we will not shop in either town. We will go out of our way to see that our tax dollars are not spent there.

Do we sound bitter? Yes, we are. We have lost belief in the government, lost a place that we loved to spend time at, and we lost an income.

I don't want Luke to close, but I see the day when Luke is closed and the base becomes an airport handling air freight and flights that go in and out at all hours. Oh, how people will complain then.

**Jean Munn
Avondale**

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AETC Bases News Clips

LUKE AFB, AZ



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West Valley letter-writers rally in defense of Luke

To the editor:

In response to Mr. Shortridge's letter, I might suggest that if he doesn't like the noise from Luke Air Force Base, that he relocate back to where he came from.

First of all I, or anyone else, do not believe his accusation that these jets fly over his residence in Estrella Mountain Ranch at "about 500 feet above the ground with afterburners." We have been around Luke too long for exaggerations like that. If you must complain, speak in truths and facts.

I guess that is the way of life now; to move into a new area and immediately start complaining and whining about 70-year-old military installations that were created to protect that very right. Mr. Shortridge, you really have gall!

**Chuck Campbell
Waddell**

To the editor:

As I read the letter written by Lew Shortridge regarding Luke altering its flights jet paths, I was compelled to voice my opinion.

It seems that almost weekly we have some individual complaining about Luke Air Force Base and the noise of the F-16s. Well, I have news for all of those people: Luke was here way before any of you were. If you are so bothered by the noise of the jets, then pack up and move. You should have done a little more research before buying a home in this area instead of just taking what a Realtor had told you as the truth. It isn't Luke's fault you chose to build on that lot or in this area.

It seems to me that almost every letter the *View* receives about Luke is from some person who has recently moved here from out of state. These "newcomers" don't have as much as a clue as to what Luke Air Force Base has done for this community throughout the years. Mr. Shortridge states that Luke should alter the flight paths so as not to fly over populated developments like the Estrella Mountain Ranch. With as

many people moving to the Valley, and all the new developments going up everywhere around the state, where do you expect these jets practice their maneuvers? If it wasn't for people like you moving to Arizona, we wouldn't be having these kinds of issues, now would we?

**Brittney Turner
Avondale**

To the editor:

Mr. Shortridge moved here just like I did, except my move to Arizona took place in 1970.

When I have relocated it is my duty to check flood plan, area disruptions, etc., not a sales person on a realty staff.

I salute Luke and it was here long before I. I moved from Glendale to Estrella Mountain Ranch in 2000 and love the area, people and above all the air planes that travel overhead, both Air Force and commercial. Luke and the military people have benefited my life even though we are not military we have met and lived near military people as neighbors and friends and I have such a great respect for them and my community.

Maybe Mr. Shortridge would enjoy being in paradise once again and leave us that salute Luke alone.

**Sue Bell
Goodyear**

To the editor:

I must admit that I am truly frustrated how the residents in the West Valley complain about the flight pattern of the jets over their homes. In the Feb. 11 issue of the *West Valley View*,

there were two letters written by Mr. Peters and Mr. Shortridge griping about how the property values were decreased because of Luke AFB and that the flight plans should be altered. Give me a break!

Luke AFB was here when you moved in and if your sales representative didn't correctly inform you of the flight patterns, you could have done the research yourself and found a home in another part of the Valley. No one made you purchase a home next to an Air Force base; you chose to do that because you felt that you could get more square feet and land for your money in the West Valley, and you did.

As an Air Force spouse, and a resident of Avondale, I know that the jets may fly over, and I am perfectly all right with that because I made the informed choice to move here, just like you did. Complaining about it only makes West Valley homeowners look like stupid and uninformed buyers to the rest of the Valley. Don't go down that route and own up to and be proud of the fact that you live next to one of the largest fighter training wings in the world!

**Rhea Isla
Avondale**

To the editor:

I feel used that someone took my serious suggestion for use of the land immediately adjacent to Luke AFB and used it to attack the base. I am a military retiree and Luke

is the only reason I live here. In fact, if it closed there would be for sale signs in every third of fourth house near the base. I moved here because all of the bases near San Francisco closed. At times, I wonder why Luke doesn't use its right of eminent domain and clear out a lot of the houses already standing. I would suggest that the writer from Arlington worry more about the nuclear plant in his backyard (that's why there is a siren on the top of the telephone pole).

Apparently, Estrella Mountain too will have to deal with a new highway cutting through. Luke has been here since World War II and isn't moving for you. Get used to it.

**Ed Tilton
Goodyear**

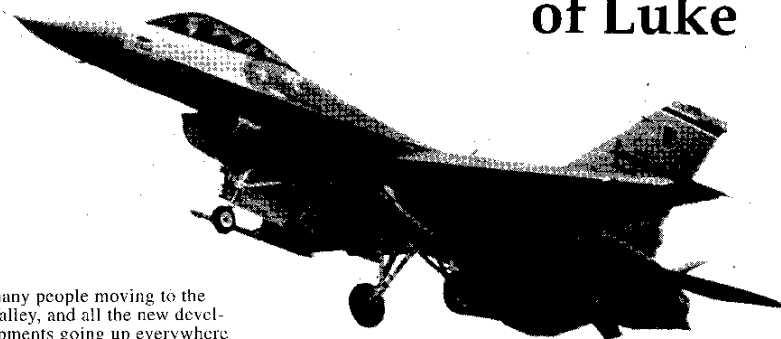
To the editor:

Mr. Shortridge states that his Realtor was not up front about the jets flying over Estrella Mountain Ranch, so he complains to the air base.

Ha, ha, ha. I'm sorry I was laughing — five planes a day. Please, we live near the White Tanks and receive over a 100 flyovers a day. Than again, some days we have none.

First off, the base was here first. Second you are just a NIMBY. You want them to fly, but Not In Your Back Yard!

He states that the planes should fly over cactus and sand. Just what was that lot you built your



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AETC Bases News Clips

LUKE AFB, AZ



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Guest commentary

Base preservation key to Arizona's future

by Rep. John Nelson
Legislative District 12

Nearly two and a half years since terrorist attacks sent the nation's economy into decline, it appears Arizona is beginning to emerge from the two-year recession that has stunted economic growth and crippled state and local budgets. Consumer spending is up, companies are hiring new workers and tax revenue is increasing.

In spite of these positive signs, Arizona's economic future is anything but secure. One unknown lies ahead which if ignored, could potentially halt our state's economic recovery in its tracks.

That unknown is the fate of Arizona's military bases, and the very real possibility that some of them could be closed in the Defense Department's next base realignment and closure (BRAC) review. If these facilities are closed, Arizona's economy will be damaged by the potential loss of 88,000 jobs and \$5.8 billion in revenue generated by the bases.

It's for this reason that I, with the support and cooperation of state Representatives Jennifer Burns (R-Oro Valley), Bill Arnold (R-Goodyear), and Phil Hanson (R-Peoria), beginning earlier this summer, have been meeting with representatives of Arizona's



John Nelson

military bases, local elected officials, property owners and developers in a concentrated, cooperative effort to determine what actions the state must take to ensure our military bases' survival. This effort has been guided by the following principles:

- Involving all stakeholders in the process by bringing property owners, developers, base officials, city and county leaders together on a consensus package of proposals.
- Removing potential obstacles to the military facilities' ability to accomplish their missions.
- Protecting private property rights by ensuring landowners are fairly compensated for any new restrictions placed on their property.

These meetings have culminated in a series of proposals which, if adopted, will diminish the possibility of base closures in Arizona, and help secure a bright economic future for our state. They include measures affecting land use and development around military facilities and under the flight routes used to traverse them. The goal of these proposals will be to ensure that the bases are capable of fulfilling their military missions.

For example, Rep. Burns and I will be offering a measure on military training route notification and range preservation, ensuring our pilots' ability to traverse to and from the Barry Goldwater Range and other bases. By involving representatives of all parties affected by this measure from the beginning, our proposal already enjoys widespread support. It's our hope that this consensus will lead to the legislation's speedy passage.

Additionally, Representatives Arnold and Hanson, and Senator Robert Blendu and I will be presenting legislation dealing with lot split authority for counties and the location of underground gasoline storage facilities.

Central to this package of proposals is the need for a funding mechanism that allows property owners to be adequately and fairly compensated for the inevitable new restrictions on their land. We hope to complete work on such funding in the near future. We feel strongly that, after years of promises, it's time for the landowners to receive the compensation they deserve.

Throughout this process, we have been supported by House leadership. Speaker Jake Flake has made military base preservation one of his top priorities, and has provided us with the staff and resources necessary to produce a workable package of legislative proposals. Additionally, the State Land Department and Lisa Atkins of the County Supervisors Association have provided invaluable assistance.

The economic benefits of Arizona's military facilities are undisputed. By some accounts, they are equivalent to the jobs and revenue generated by Arizona's seven largest employers. It's for this reason the state must act now.

Our efforts to preserve Arizona's bases will likely be labeled by some as expensive.

But doing nothing will cost the state far more today and in the future.

John Nelson, a Republican from District 12, represents the West Valley at the State Legislature.

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